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His Methodist Foot

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Walter H. Baker & Company

No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

His Methodist Foot

A Farce in One Act

By
VANCE C. CRISS



BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

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PS 3505
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His Methodist Foot

CHARACTERS

BOOK AGENT.
MR. JONES.
MRS. JONES.
SALLY JONES.
BOBBY JONES.

MRS. BINKS.
MRS. STUBBS.
MRS. LANE.
MRS. JOHNSON.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

A dust cloth for Mrs. Jones.
A satchel with a book in it, to be carried under the coat, and a note-book for the book agent.
A generous supply of chewing gum for Sally.
A bouquet to be brought in by Bobby.

TIME IN PLAYING.—Twenty minutes.



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AUG -5 1916

No. 1.

CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERISTICS

BOOK AGENT. A young man, a smooth talker, who has plenty of self-confidence and who is not too flashily dressed.

MR. JONES. Middle-aged man, not very well, but not very shabbily dressed.

MRS. JONES. Middle-aged woman who is the boss of her own home. At her last appearance she should wear her "Sunday" clothes. At her other appearances she may wear over this costume a house apron. This will make entire change of costume unnecessary.

SALLY. A girl who is just beginning to find that men are attractive.

BOBBY. Should be played by a small person, costumed for an eight or nine year old boy.

MRS. BINKS, MRS. STUBBS, MRS. LANE AND MRS. JOHNSON. All middle-aged and about of the same type. Mrs. Binks and Mrs. Lane are rather gushing; Mrs. Stubbs is curious, and Mrs. Johnson is sharp of face and very assertive.

His Methodist Foot

SCENE.—*An interior. In the left wall toward the front there is a window, and above it, up stage, a door leading out-of-doors. Opposite this door, in the right wall, there is another door giving access to the rest of the house. There is a sofa or davenport down L. opposite the window, a table at C., a chair at R. of stage and another one up C. against the centre wall where a piano may be placed also, if convenient.*

(Curtain rises and discloses MRS. JONES dusting table.)

MR. JONES *(entering at door R. and approaching wife)*. Martha, the new preacher just telephoned that he was on his way here to call. He said he'd stopped on the road to let us know, so he ought to be here right soon.

MRS. JONES. Sakes alive! What's he a-comin' for on the very day the Widow's Mite Circle is meetin' here t' sew? We ain't had a chanct t' talk him over yet, an' here he's a-comin' t' attend th' first meetin' we've had since he took charge o' th' church.

MR. JONES. I reckon it can't be helped, but maybe you'll have a little better chance to size him up. I'm real glad he's coming. I've never met him yet.

MRS. JONES. No more have I. With all th' work I've had t' do, an' him just gettin' settled, I ain't had a bit o' time t' go callin'. I'll have t' be callin' on his wife right soon.

MR. JONES. Wife! Great guns, Martha, he ain't even married.

MRS. JONES. Ain't married! That new clerk in Sanders' store said he was married, an' had two childern.

MR. JONES. Well, I can't help that. Deacon Skinner said they were getting him partly because he was a young man, and, not being married, might take more interest in the church.

(Door-bell rings.)

MRS. JONES. Land sakes! Who's that?

MR. JONES (*after going to the window*). I don't know him, so it must be the new preacher.

MRS. JONES. Here's a pretty mess; me with my sleeves rolled up and apron on, an' all th' flour from bakin' them cookies ain't off of my arms yet. Henry Jones, you'll have t' open that door an' let him in.

MR. JONES (*suddenly grasping at throat*). Great Christopher! I can't go. I ain't got any collar on.

(*Bolts out door R.*)

MRS. JONES (*gazing angrily after husband*). Well, I never! (*Door-bell rings again.*) All right, I heard you. You can just wait a little bit for comin' when you're not wanted. (*Leisurely wipes arms with dust cloth, rolls down sleeves, and goes to door L. Opens door.*) Come in.

BOOK AGENT (*entering with bow and ingratiating smile*). Mrs. Jones?

MRS. JONES. You must be ——

AGENT (*extending hand*). Ah, my dear Mrs. Jones, so delighted to meet you. The Rev. Mr. Mutt ——

MRS. JONES. Oh, I recognized you right away, even if I ain't had th' pleasure o' meetin' you. I'm terrible sorry I ain't been out t' hear you preach, but some o' my friends has told me so much about you that I'd 'a' known you anywheres.

AGENT (*bewildered*). But, my dear Mrs. Jones ——

MRS. JONES. Now you mustn't begin to scold, Rev. Mutt. I promise you I'll do better after this.

AGENT (*still bewildered*). But, Mrs. Jones, I'm sure you don't understand. You see ——

MRS. JONES (*confidently*). Yes, I do understand. I can tell from th' way you're a-lookin' that you're a-criticizin' me for not bein' fixed up. But you just take a cheer there. (*Points to chair nearest piano, and AGENT sits down.*) I've got t' step out a minnit or two an' fix up a little an' bring in th' childern. Let me have your hat. S'posin' you set over there on th' sofy. It's more comfortabler than them cheers. (*AGENT moves over to settee; MRS. JONES places his hat on the piano and crosses to door R. Turns to AGENT as she goes out.*) I'll be back in a minnit or two.

AGENT (*looking after MRS. JONES with puzzled expression*). I certainly would like to know what's wrong with that sister. She evidently doesn't know who I am; but who in thunder does she take me for?

MRS. JONES (*off stage R.*). Sally! Sally!

AGENT. By George, I'll bet she thinks I'm that new preacher I got to give me a list of names.

MRS. JONES (*entering with SALLY JONES, R.*). This here's my daughter, Sally, an' if I do say it myself, she's about as fine a daughter as they is in our church. Sally, this here's Rev. Mutt. Come an' shake hands with him.

SALLY (*vigorously chewing gum, advances and takes AGENT'S outstretched hand*). I'm tickled t' meet y'u.

MRS. JONES. Lawsame, Sally, ain't I told you better than t' be a-chewin' gum when they's company here? Throw that gum away this minnit!

SALLY. All right, ma.

(*Puts gum under table and takes chair nearest piano.*)

MRS. JONES. You'll have t' excuse me again. I've got some bakin' in th' oven, an' I've got t' fix up a bit. But I'll be back right shortly. (*Starts to leave.*)

AGENT (*starting to rise*). But, my dear Mrs. Jones —

MRS. JONES (*wheeling about*). Now set right down, Rev. Mutt. I won't be gone long. [*Exit, R.*]

SALLY. There ain't no stoppin' ma when she sets her head. Pa's quit tryin'.

AGENT. I'm sure you must be quite a talented musician. Won't you play for me?

SALLY (*doubtfully*). What kinda pieces do you like?

AGENT. Oh, anything that's lively.

SALLY (*seating herself at the piano, after taking her gum from under the table*). Gee whiz, I was scared you'd want some o' them hymn tunes, an' my teacher ain't long on that kinda music.

(*SALLY plays a few measures of any popular "rag," when her mother, in consternation, enters R.*)

MRS. JONES. Sally Jones, what on earth do you mean, a-playin' that kinda music when th' minister's here! Do you want t' disgrace th' whole fambly? Seems like you want t' make th' new minister think you ain't had a bit o' raisin'.

AGENT (*conciliatingly*). Why, Mrs. Jones, I like music like that. It certainly started my Methodist foot.

MRS. JONES (*in surprise*). Your Meth'dist foot! Land sakes, I thought you was a Babtist.

AGENT (*slightly confused*). Yes, yes, to be sure; I am a Baptist, but you see, you see—one of my grandmothers was a Methodist.

BOBBY JONES (*entering R.*). Say, ma ——

MRS. JONES (*turning upon BOBBY*). Bobby Jones, whatever do you mean, a-comin' in here a-lookin' like that? Didn't I tell you you had t' clean up afore you could meet th' minister? You come out here with me right now, an' I'll see that you get a washin' that'll be a real washin'.

(*Exit, R., dragging BOBBY, who looks back over his shoulder at the AGENT.*)

AGENT. Really, Miss Sally, you play remarkably well. Your playing is a rare treat.

SALLY (*somewhat confused*). Aw, now, you're just a-sayin' that.

AGENT. No, indeed. I mean every word I say. (*Crosses to piano and tries to take her hand, but she puts her hands behind her back.*) And beside that, Miss Sally, you're a wonderfully charming girl.

SALLY (*giggling*). Law sakes, Rev. Mutt, th' last preacher we had never thought nothin' like that about me, or leastwise he never said it.

AGENT (*taking her hand, at which SALLY drops her head, but glances at him out of the corner of her eye and chews her gum vigorously*). Then he must have been a dull fellow. You see, it didn't take me long to find out what a charming ——

MRS. JONES (*entering R., with BOBBY; stopping in middle of room and raising her hands in consternation*). Laws a-mercy, what's a-goin' on here, Rev. Mutt? You, a preacher, a-holdin' my daughter's hand!

AGENT (*hurriedly returning to the settee*). Really, my dear Mrs. Jones, I don't see how any man, minister or any one else, could refrain from telling your daughter what a charming young lady she is.

MRS. JONES (*completely mollified*). Well, I reckon it ain't for me t' be a-criticizin' a minister for appreciatin' my daughter, if I do say it myself.

AGENT. No, indeed, Mrs. Jones; and Robert is really a most promising young man.

MRS. JONES. Oh, he's a good one all right. You just ought t' hear him say pieces. Bobby, let's hear you recite that piece you said at school, Friday a week ago.

BOBBY. Aw shucks, no. I ain't no girl, t' be a-sayin' speeches all th' time.

MRS. JONES (*raising a threatening finger*). Robert Jones, you'll do what I say, or I'll take you out t' th' wood-shed. Do you think I'm a-goin' t' let th' new minister think I ain't th' boss in my own home? (*Takes chair nearest piano. BOBBY reluctantly stations himself at extreme R. and says his speech. Any "kid" speech, preferably one that has a local application, may be used here.*) Bobby really can do a lot better'n that. He's on most o' th' Sunday-school programs, an' you'll more'n likely hear him again afore long.

AGENT. Indeed, Mrs. Jones, I certainly trust I may have that pleasure. And really, Mrs. Jones, I came to see you upon a mission that may be of especial interest to Bobby. I am the representative of—

MRS. JONES (*rising*). Sakes alive! I smell them cookies a-burnin', an' I'll have t' go take 'em up. I'll leave Sally an' Bobby t' entertain you. [*Exits hurriedly, R.*]

AGENT (*after glancing alternately at BOBBY and SALLY*). Really, Miss Sally, there was something more I wanted to say to you, but circumstances seem against me.

BOBBY (*who has seated himself upon chair at extreme R.*). Say, Rev. Mutt, when you was a kid, did your ma make you dress up an' say pieces, like ma makes me, when th' preacher come?

AGENT. No, Bobby, she didn't. When the minister came to call, I always went out in the yard to play.

BOBBY. Shucks, I ain't goin' t' do that. They ain't nobody t' play with. I'd rather set in here an' talk t' you an' Sally.

SALLY. He's a sticker, all right.

AGENT. Bobby, how'd you like to earn a nickel to put in the collection plate next Sunday, just like your father does?

BOBBY. Aw, shucks, pa don't put no money in th' collection plate, an' I don't want to, neither.

AGENT. Then how would you like to earn a nickel to spend as you want to?

BOBBY. Gee, I never heard o' preachers givin' kids a chanct t' earn a nickel, but I'd like to.

AGENT. Good. You go out and gather a nice bouquet of flowers from the garden I noticed in the back yard, and I'll give you a nickel when you bring me the flowers. Now, get a nice bouquet. Don't try to hurry, because I want you to get only nice flowers.

BOBBY. What'd you want with 'em?

AGENT (*smiling at SALLY, who titters*). That's a secret. You go now, and I'll give you the nickel when you bring in the flowers.

BOBBY. I'm goin' right now.

[*Exit, R.*]

AGENT. Now Miss Sally — (*Rises and starts toward her; door-bell rings, and he halts suddenly.*) What in thunderation —

SALLY. Why, Rev. Mutt, what kinda words are you a-usin'?

(*Door-bell rings again.*)

AGENT. Confound that bell.

SALLY. I bet that's some o' th' Widow's Mite Sewin' Circle. They're a-goin' t' meet here to-day.

AGENT. Oh, darn the circle. One kiss, at least, from those ruby lips.

(*He starts toward her, but she eludes him and hurries to the door L., which she throws open, while he angrily seats himself upon the settee.*)

Enter MRS. BINKS and MRS. STUBBS, hesitating between piano and settee.

SALLY. Ma'll be in in a minnit, I reckon. Rev. Mutt, these here are Mrs. Binks and Mrs. Stubbs, two o' th' circle.

AGENT (*rising and bowing*). I am delighted to meet you both, I assure you.

MRS. BINKS. Lawsame, Rev. Mutt, I hardly knowed you, with your moustache shaved off.

MRS. STUBBS. Really, Rev. Mutt, I know it's a little curious, but I'm powerful anxious to know if you're married.

AGENT (*glancing about uncertainly*). Won't you folks sit down? I'm quite sure you'll find this settee very comfortable.

(*Women take settee, SALLY occupies piano stool, and AGENT takes chair nearest piano.*)

MRS. STUBBS. As I was sayin', Rev. Mutt, I certainly don't want to seem curious, but are you married yet?

AGENT (*fidgiting nervously*). Well, Mrs.—Mrs.—Mrs. —

SALLY. Stubbs.

AGENT. Yes, that's it, Stubbs. You see, the fact is—that is—well, I haven't been called on to marry any one yet, but

I'm hoping my services will be more in demand when I become better known.

MRS. STUBBS. Oh, I didn't mean that at all, Rev. Mutt. I mean have you got a wife of your own?

MRS. JONES (*entering R.*). Why, Mrs. Binks an' Mrs. Stubbs. I'm powerful glad t' see you. An' ain't it fine, havin' th' new minister with us, so soon after him a-comin' t' town?

MRS. BINKS. Would you believe it now, Mrs. Jones, but I hardly knowed him with his moustache shaved off.

MRS. STUBBS. There's an old sayin' that them that perseveres gets there in the end. I've been a-askin' a question here for the last half hour that I ain't had answered yet, and I'm a-goin' to ask it again. As I was a-sayin', Rev. Mutt, have you got a wife, or are you still single?

(AGENT *fidgets while MRS. STUBBS is talking, but is relieved when door-bell rings as she finishes.*)

MRS. JONES. I bet that's another o' th' circle. (*Goes to door R., opens it, and MRS. LANE enters.*) Mrs. Lane, I'm sure glad t' see you. We've got a regular treat in store for us, for here's Rev. Mutt, our new minister, who just happened t' drop in t' call.

MRS. LANE (*rushing to shake AGENT's hand*). I'm just too delighted to meet you. And you can't guess who I saw just a little while ago. It was down-town in Sanders' store. You don't know, do you? (AGENT *shakes head.*) It was your wife and baby.

SALLY (*who, in her excitement, had risen, sinks down upon the piano stool and piano, and screams*). Oh! Oh! Oh!

MRS. JONES (*rushing to her*). What's the matter? What's the matter?

SALLY (*sobbing*). I set down on a pin.

MRS. JONES. Well, if you've set on a pin, what good is it a-doin' you t' keep on settin' there? (SALLY *slowly gets up and moves to chair at extreme R., where she sits and continues to sob silently. AGENT fidgets nervously. MRS. JONES sits on piano stool; MRS. LANE goes to settee; AGENT takes chair nearest piano.*) Now that th' minister's here, an' afore th' others come, don't you ladies think it'd be a good thing t' tell Rev. Mutt somethin' about th' people that's liable t' hinder him in tryin' t' run th' church right?

(*Women nod and turn to AGENT.*)

AGENT. I shall be only too glad to obtain any information that will aid me in my work.

MRS. JONES. First o' all, there's Mrs. Smith. That's Jim Smith's wife. If she ain't th' chairman o' every committee an' th' boss o' every sociable an' th' like, she won't have nothin' t' do with none o' th' work. She's actually so bossy that she wouldn't do a thing for th' last sociable because she wasn't th' first one asked t' bake a pie. (AGENT, *who has taken out notebook, writes as* MRS. JONES *talks.*) Land sakes, Rev. Mutt, you ain't a-writin' down what I'm a-sayin', are you?

AGENT. Yes, indeed, Mrs. Jones. This is very valuable information that will assist me materially in separating the goats from the calves.

MRS. STUBBS. Calves!

AGENT. I mean sheep.

MRS. BINKS. An' then there's th' Widow Sanders, th' mother o' th' Sanders that runs th' store. She's got all sorts o' money, but she holds on to it tighter'n fly paper upside down on a dinner table. She's so stingy she won't buy needles. She makes th' hired hand sharpen th' old ones.

SALLY (*rising with a tragic gesture*). Love's young dream is ended. (*Dashes out door R.*)

MRS. JONES. I reckon that there pin must 'a' caught in her dress.

MRS. LANE. Yes, an' don't you forget that Miss Mandy Judkins. She's th' worst old backbiter ever was. Even old Granny Mason, who's deaf in both ears, can't set on th' front seat at services without Mandy Judkins a-sayin' she's there t' make goo goo eyes at th' preacher.

(*Door L. opens without warning, and* MRS. JOHNSON *enters.*)

MRS. JOHNSON. Howdy, everybody. I just took the liberty of comin' on in, Mrs. Jones.

MRS. JONES. Oh, Mrs. Johnson, I want you t' meet our new minister, Rev. Mutt.

MRS. JOHNSON (*staring sharply at* AGENT). That man ain't our minister. Rev. Mutt's been a-callin' at our house twice. That there man's a impostor.

(*All are too surprised to speak, until the* AGENT *breaks the silence.*)

AGENT. That is all very true, ladies, but I had no desire to play the impostor. It was a mistake. If you recall, Mrs.

Jones, I tried to stop you to explain, but you wouldn't allow me. I am Henry Smith, representing the Jonas Publishing Company. (*Takes book from satchel under his coat.*) Allow me to show you the work we are selling at the ridiculously low figure of two dollars and ninety-eight cents, cash on delivery. The work is handsomely bound and finely illustrated, and contains stories of all the Bible heroes. It should be in every home where there are children, and also in the homes where there are none. May I put each of you down for an order?

MRS. JONES. Not me.

MRS. BINKS. Nor me, either.

MRS. STUBBS. I'm sure I don't want your old book.

AGENT (*taking out note-book*). Very well, then, I shall call upon the ladies you have so highly recommended, and see if they do not wish to buy.

MRS. JONES (*in great alarm*). D' you mean you'd be low down enough t' tell 'em what we said?

AGENT. Such a course might be necessary.

(*Women are alarmed. Those on settee converse a moment in undertones.*)

MRS. STUBBS. An' if we buy the book you won't say a word t' any o' them folks?

AGENT. If each of you buys a book, I'm sure I shall not mention a word that has been said.

MRS. BINKS. I'll take one.

MRS. JONES. An' so will I.

MRS. STUBBS. Put me down for one, too.

BOBBY (*entering R. with bouquet*). Here's your flowers. Where's my money?

AGENT (*handing him money*). Here are two nickels instead of one. Present the bouquet to Miss Sally, with my compliments, and tell her it is a little token of the time the agent played the parson.

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